

Message Text

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ACTION SS-15

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R 100440Z JAN 75

FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9678

INFO AMEMBASSY JAKRRTA

AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH

AMEMBASSY SAIGON

AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE

C O N F I D E N T I A L BANGKOK 0475

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, US, TH

SUBJ: UNDER-SECRETARY MAW'S CALL ON THE THAI FOREIGN MINISTER

JAKARTA PLEASE PASS UNDER-SECRETARY MAW

SUMMARY: UNDER SECRETARY MAW CALLED ON FOREIGN MINISTER CHARUNPHAN ITSARANGKUN NA AYUTTHAYA JANUARY 9. THE UNDER SECRETARY STRESSED THE MUTUALITY OF THAI AND U.S. INTERESTS IN PEACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA, AS WELL AS THE HIGH VALUE THE U.S. PLACES ON COOPERATION WITH THAILAND. HE NOTED CONGRESSIONAL PROBLEMS WITH FOREIGN AID, BUT SAID THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD DO ITS BEST. THEY ALSO DISCUSSED THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM, CAMBODIA, AND LAOS. CHARUNPHAN REITERATED HIS BELIEF ABOUT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE DESIRE FOR HEGEMONY IN INDOCHINA.

1. UNDER SECRETARY MAW OPENED BY COMMENTING THAT HE HOPED CHARUNPHAN HAD BEEN ABLE TO IMPRESS THE NECESSITY FOR SECURITY ASSISTANCE ON SENATORS THURMOND AND SCOTT, WITH WHOM HE HAD MET THE DAY BEFORE (BANGKOK 355). CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT ALTHOUGH RTG POLICY TOWARD THE UNITED STATES WAS TO PLACE GREATER STRESS ON ECONOMIC COOPERATWON, PARTICULARLY

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TRADE, AND TO DEEMPHASIZE MILITARY AFFAIRS BECAUSE OF THE

INTERNATIONAL AURA OF DETENTE, THAILAND STILL NEEDED MILITARY AID. THAILAND WAS STRIVING FOR SELF-RELIANCE, AND HAD INCREASED ITS MILITARY BUDGET IN 1974, BUT HAD A CONTINUING NEED FOR MILITARY EQUIPMENT.

2. CHARUNPHAN REITERATED HIS THEME OF THE PREVIOUS DAY WITH THE SENATORS THAT NORTH VIETNAM WAS NOT LOOKING FOR PEACE. IT WANTED HEGEMONY IN INDOCHINA. THE AMBASSADOR INTERJECTED TO SAY THAT CHARUNPHAN'S REPLY TO THE TRINH LETTER WAS A MASTERPIECE (BANGKOK 390).

3. MR. MAW STRESSED THE MUTUALITY OF THAI AND U.S. INTERESTS IN PEACE IN SOUTHEAST ASIA. HE SAID THAT THE U.S. HIGHLY VALUED COOPERATION WITH THAILAND. HE HOPED THAT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT WOULD BE FORTHCOMING WITH MILITARY AID, BUT SECURITY WAS NOT THE MOST POPULAR PROGRAM THAT THE ADMINISTRATION SPONSORED. HE SAID THAT GETTING THE AID BILL THROUGH CONGRESS WOULD BE A SERIOUS PROBLEM, BUT THAT WE WOULD DO OUR BEST.

4. CHARUNPHAN SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE THE UNDER SECRETARY TO UNDERSTAND THE INTERNAL SITUATION THAT THAILAND HAD TO FACE. CERTAIN PEOPLE WOULD LIKE TO SEE U.S. TROOPS WITHDRAW. NORTH VIETNAM HAS SAID THAT THE MAIN OBSTACLE TO NORMALIZING RELATIONS WITH THAILAND IS THE U.S. TROOP PRESENCE. THE THAI TOLD THE NORTH VIETNAMESE THAT THAT WAS ONLY A PART OF THE PROBLEM. CHARUNPHAN EMPHASIZED THAT THE RTG WOULD LIKE TO KEEP ON WITH A PEACEFUL APPROACH TO HANOI. HE SAID HE HAD EMPHASIZED THAT DWELLING ON THE PAST WOULD NOT HELP IN REACHING AN UNDERSTANDING.

5. MR. MAW POINTED OUT THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD CONDUCTED A STRONG PROPAGANDA CAMPAIGN ACCUSING THE SOUTH OF TRUCE VIOLATIONS THE DAY BEFORE OVERRUNNING PHUOC BINH. THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE INVOLVED WAS NOT GREAT, BUT THE PROPAGANDA VALUE OF THE LOSS OF A PROVINCE CAPITAL WAS INTENSE. HE RECALLED HIS LONG TALK WITH PRESIDENT THIEU WHO WAS SAD THAT THE SOUTH HAS LOST THE BATTLE, BUT WAS PROUD OF THE DEFENDERS. THIEU HAD MENTIONED THAT THEY HAD KNOCKED OUT 21 TANKS ON THE GROUND VERSUS ONLY THREE THAT

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THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE AIR FORCE HAD DESTROYED.

6. CHARUNPHAN ASKED HOW THE UNDER SECRETARY VIEWED THE SITUATION IN SOUTH VIETNAM. MR. MAW REPLIED THAT HE WAS IMPRESSED WITH THE COURAGE AND DETERMINATION WHICH EVERYONE SHOWED. HE SAID THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ARMY WAS, MAN FOR MAN, MORE THAN A MATCH FOR THE NORTH VIETNAMESE. THE VIET CONG WERE RELATIVELY NOT A PROBLEM SINCE THE OPPOSING FORCES WERE

MOSTLY NORTH VIETNAMESE. THERE HAD BEEN A DEFINITE DECLINE IN POPULAR SUPPORT FOR THE VIET CONG, AND LOCAL PEOPLE WERE DROPPING OUT OF THE ORGANIZATION. ON THE OTHER HAND, THE NUMBER OF NORTH VIETNAMESE FORCES IN SOUTH VIETNAM IS LARGER THAN EVER BEFORE AND THEY ARE BETTER EQUIPPED THAN THEY HAD BEEN WITH TANKS, ANTI-AIRCRAFT GUNS, AND SOPHISTICATED WEAPONS. IN ADDITION THEY HAVE ENOUGH AMMUNITION AND FOOD STOCKPILED TO LAST FOR A LONG TIME. THE AMBASSADOR MENTIONED THAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE ALSO HAD QUITE A ROAD NET ON BOTH SIDES OF THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE BORDER. CHARUNPHAN COMMENTED THAT ALL THIS INFORMATION INDICATED WHAT THE NORTH VIETNAMESE HAD IN MIND. KEEPING THE HO CHI MINH TRAIL WAS PROOF OF NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS.

7. CHARUNPHAN THEN ASKED ABOUT CAMBODIA. MR. MAW SAID THAT WAS A DIFFERENT STORY. PHNOM PENH WAS UNDER SIEGE; ONE HEARS GUNS AND ROCKETS LAND IN TOWN. THE CAMBODIANS SAY THAT IF WE CONTINUE TO GIVE THEM AMMUNITION, THEY CAN HOLD PHNOM PENH. THEY DO NOT, HOWEVER, HAVE THE SAME FEELINGS AS THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE ABOUT EVENTUAL VICTORY. CHARUNPHAN COMMENTED THAT THERE SHOULD BE A MOVE TOWARD NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO CAMBODIAN SIDES BEFORE NEXT YEAR.

8. CHARUNPHAN THEN ASKED WHETHER THE UNDER SECRETARY WAS OPTIMISTIC ABOUT LAOS. MR. MAW REPLIED THAT THE LAO HAD APPARENTLY WORKED TOGETHER FOR OVER A YEAR. CHARUNPHAN RECALLED THAT HE WAS THE AMBASSADOR IN LAOS DURING AN EARLIER TRIPARTITE GOVERNMENT THAT LASTED ONLY THREE MONTHS. HE HAD RECENTLY VISITED LAOS AND THE SITUATION NOW SEEMED IMPROVED. THE TWO SIDES SEEM TO WORK BETTER TOGETHER THAN BEFORE. THE RTG TRIES TO BE FRIENDLY TO LAOS AND IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE LAO DO NOT WANT THE VIETNAMESE TO BE THEIR CONFIDENTIAL

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MASTERS. WHILE THE LAO STILL HAVE TO LISTEN TO HANOI, THEY WON'T TURN AWAY FROM THAILAND BECAUSE OF THE SIMILARITY IN LANGUAGE, TRADITION, CUSTOMS. LAOS SHOULD BE A TEST CASE TO SEE WHETHER A COALITION GOVERNMENT CAN WORK IN INDOCHINA.

9. COMMENT: THE RTG, DESPITE ATTEMPTING A DIALOGUE WITH HANOI, HAS NO ILLUSIONS ABOUT NORTH VIETNAMESE INTENTIONS IN INDOCHINA.

10. NOTE: UNDER SECRETARY MAW LEFT BANGKOK BEFORE WE DRAFTED THIS TELEGRAM, AND THUS MAY HAVE AMENDMENTS OR ADDITIONS TO MAKE TO IT.
KINTNER

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